

Memorandum



Date: August 5, 2026

To: Planning Commission Members

From: Kristen Gundersen, Planning and Community Development Director

Subject: **Master Plan Update Discussion 7 – Goals and Objectives Discussion - Update and Next Steps**

Background

The Planning Commission has been working on the Master Plan since January 2026 after the Southwestern Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) was hired to complete the project. The current Master Plan was adopted in 2021. An online survey, two community engagement opportunities have been completed. During the July 14th meeting, the Planning Commission began work on the Future Land Use Map.

Staff also introduced the need to work on the Objectives, Goals and Tasks portion of the Master Plan. The 2021 Plan included 12 areas consisting of 32 objectives and 51 goals. Following is the number of objectives and goals for each area:

1. Hometown Character – 2 objectives – 2 goals
2. History & Art – 4 objectives - 3 goals
3. Recreation & Tourism – 2 objectives - 5 goals
4. Thriving Business Climate – 3 objectives - 7 goals
5. Infrastructure – 2 objectives 4 goals
6. Education – 3 objectives 2 goals
7. Housing -3 objectives 6 goals
8. Responsive Government – 5 objectives 5 goals
9. Transportation & Mobility – 3 objectives 5 goals
10. Land Use – 1 objective 4 goals
11. Natural Resources – 3 objective 4 goals
12. Regional Leadership – 1 objective 4 goals

The complete list and descriptions were included in the July 14th agenda packet.

Staff recommended condensing the number of objectives to five as described below. In addition, staff have drafted goals and action items for the different objects to help begin the discussion. The time frame, key partners and tool columns have not been completed. An example of time frame could be:

On-going	annually
Near	1 – 3 years
Short	4 – 5 years
Long	5 – 20 years

Proposed Objectives:

1. Strong Neighborhoods and Housing – increase housing options, diversity, and supply, support existing housing improvement program, housing incentives, vacant and underutilized buildings/properties, built environment, short-term rentals
2. Vibrant Community – natural resources (wetlands, forested areas, streams, river), connecting trails, walkability, complete streets, architecture, historic districts, art, culture, education, non-profits, public events
3. Infrastructure, Public Assets, Utilities and Services – streets, alleys, sidewalks, trails, sewer, water, stormwater, city owned buildings, asset management, parks/recreation facilities and programming, canopy trees (Tree City USA), public parking, broadband, capital improvement planning, public transportation, waste disposal and recycling, brush/yard waste, public safety -fire, police, snow removal
4. Effective Government – responsive, transparency, communication, public participation, fair treatment, land use and zoning, code enforcement, attain/maintain Redevelopment Ready Certification and implement best practices, participate in regional bodies/efforts (NATS, economic development organizations, etc), cooperation with local governments and the County
5. Economic Vitality – downtown, DDA, commercial, industrial, tourism, economic development, redevelopment, marketing, business and entrepreneurship support

Next Steps

Review the draft objectives, goals and actions and direct staff to make changes as needed.

It is likely the draft Future Land Use map will be available for review at the September meeting where revisions to the draft Objectives, Goals and Actions can be further reviewed.

DRAFT 1 - OBJECTIVES, GOALS AND ACTIONS FOR MASTER PLAN (PC08112026)

Strong Neighborhoods and Housing – increase housing options, diversity, and supply, support existing housing improvement program, housing incentives, vacant and underutilized buildings/properties, built environment, short-term rentals

#	Goal	Action	Timeframe	Key Partners	Tool
	Diversity and Supply	Educate community regarding need for additional housing options. Prepare information for website and possible newsletters.			
		Support new landlords and renters with “Welcome to Buchanan” resources.			
		Continue work on the UDC to improve and address concerns.			
		Review building permits issued to determine if changes are needed to the zoning ordinance to help provide additional housing options.			
		Study and discuss tiny house developments to determine if appropriate and recommend changes to zoning ordinance.			
		Monitor the short-term rental regulations and certificates issued and recommend changes as needed.			
	Housing Improvement	Investigate funding opportunities to help property owners improve dwellings.			
		Work with other organizations and development community to create opportunities to improve the existing housing stock			
		develop an accessible housing renovations pattern book.			
		Identify residential properties that need improvement.			
	Housing Incentives	Investigate funding incentives, opportunities, and sources to help create low and moderate housing options in the community.			
		Work with development community to educate the housing incentives available on a local and statewide basis.			
		Promote the Buchanan Promise program.			
	Vacant and Under-Utilized Buildings	Implement adopted ordinance requiring registration of vacant and under-utilized buildings.			
		Work with property owners to reactivate buildings and properties.			

Vibrant Community –natural resources (wetlands, forested areas, streams, river), connecting trails, walkability, complete streets, architecture, historic districts, art, culture, education, non-profits, public events

#	Goal	Action	Timeframe	Key Partners	Tool
	Maintain and Enhance Natural Resources	Encourage the use of natural landscaping in community parks, around public facilities and on private land, where appropriate.			
		Encourage development along water ways while provide public access to the water.			
		continue to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).			
	Connect trails, improve walkability	Continue to promote the 50/50 sidewalk replacement program.			
		Look for opportunities to expand existing trail systems within the community while eliminating any known gaps.			
		Establish regulations for sidewalk to be installed when vacant property is developed.			
		Pursue Trail Town designation			
	Architecture, heritage, historic character	establish list of appropriate locations in need of placemaking activities			
		encourage activating alleys in commercial areas to be enjoyed by the community.			
		pursue placemaking funding opportunities			
		Investigate opportunities for façade grants or low interest loans for historic buildings.			
		promote community events			
	Gateways, parks and streets	Expand beautification efforts (entryway signage and landscaping) to enhance the appearance of the public places and gateways into the City.			
		enhance streetscapes and public places to include pedestrian-friendly features such as trees, street furniture, bike racks, trash receptacles, and pedestrian scale lighting.			
		Improve linkages between downtown and established trails.			
		Implement the goals and objectives identified within the BARB Master Plan.			
		Update parks plans as required every 5-years.			
		ensure all parks are accessible by non-motorized transportation and provide safe and convenient bike parking.			
		Pursue grant funding to support identified park projects.			

Infrastructure, Public Assets, Utilities and Services – streets, alleys, sidewalks, trails, sewer, water, stormwater, city owned buildings, asset management, parks/recreation facilities and programming, canopy trees (Tree City USA), public parking, broadband, capital improvement planning, public transportation, waste disposal and recycling, brush/yard waste, snow removal

#	Goal	Action	Timeframe	Key Partners	Tool
	Public Assets	Establish and maintain a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for large budget projects.			
		Continue to evaluate the condition of local streets and utilities on an annual basis.			
		Develop plans to implement sidewalk, trail extensions, corridor improvements, destination points, and visual elements in the City.			
		Continue developing the City's geographic information system (GIS) to assist with management and community planning and development of city assets.			
		Create a plan for the ongoing maintenance of vegetation within and along rivers, creeks and other water bodies.			
		Evaluate city owned buildings to determine existing and future needs			
	Tree City USA	create a comprehensive plan for the City's tree canopy that identifies a strategy to replace dead or diseased trees, prune trees when needed, manage the spread of tree diseases, and maintain or increase the city's overall tree canopy			
		Support the ongoing street tree planting program and designation as a Tree City USA community.			
		identify a consistent funding source for tree planting.			
	Waste, Bursh and Recycling	Provide efficient and accessible solid waste disposal options within the city.			
		Continue to host City-wide clean-up days annually.			
	Parking and Transportation	Improve city owned parking lots and work to address needs of business owners for waste, recycling and grease removal.			
		Improve overnight parking opportunities for residents living downtown			
		Promote the need for an Amtrack flag stop near Redbud Trail.			
		Connect with and educate elected and appointed officials the need for a flag stop.			
		Pursue grants that will support the establishment of an Amtrack flag stop.			

Effective Government – responsive, transparency, communication, public participation, fair treatment, land use and zoning, code enforcement, attain/maintain Redevelopment Ready Certification and implement best practices, participate in regional bodies/efforts (NATS, economic development organizations, etc), cooperation with local governments and the County

#	Goal	Action	Timeframe	Key Partners	Tool
	Responsive, transparent and clear communications.	Ensure the city’s communication programs are accurate, maintained, and easily accessible for all community members including individuals with no internet access and those with disabilities.			
		Provide clear, consistent written correspondence and information when necessary.			
		Encourage the use of the City’s website to disperse information, such as planning-related resources, news releases, agendas, meeting minutes, financial information, adopted regulations and plans and any forms.			
		Communicate with property owners and tenants of the responsibilities and expectations of the city based on established rules and regulations.			
		Communication with property owners and tenants should be done via printed materials and through online opportunities to reach as many as possible.			
		Look for ways to streamline approval processes.			
		Develop work order/maintenance system for city assets			
	Public Participation and Fair Treatment	Encourage public participation in local government, including voting, services on board and commissions and volunteerism.			
		Work to obtain a diverse group of volunteers for appointment boards and commissions			
		Provide different opportunities for community engagement while meeting public notice requirements.			
		Conduct joint meetings annually of the City Commission, Planning Commission and Downtown Development Authority			
		When appropriate conduct community and neighborhood public forums to solicit public feedback from all demographic sections of the City.			
		Identify populations that are missing from critical community conversations, committees, and leadership positions, and develop relationships to bring all groups to the table.			
		evaluate and update programming as needed to meet community needs and to diversify offerings.			

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#	Goal	Action	Timeframe	Key Partners	Tool
	Land Use, Zoning, Development Regulations	Consistently enforce the current Unified Development Code and other City Ordinances.			
		Work to ensure the Unified Development Code is consistent with goals and objectives of Master Plan.			
		Follow and research advances in land use, zoning and code enforcement to help maintain the goals and objectives of the community while creating an accommodating atmosphere for the different types of development.			
		Review changes to the UDC associated with green infrastructure such as the use of permeable pavers, solar panels, rain barrels to minimize impact on adjacent property owners			
		create payment in lieu of parking provisions			
		Conduct annual review of goals and tasks found in the Master Plan. At a minimum review the Master Plan at five-year intervals per state law.			
	Code Enforcement and Property Maintenance	Consistently and fairly enforce Unified Development Code and other City Ordinances.			
		Review existing regulations pertaining to blight and property maintenance and recommend needed changes.			
		continue to improve property maintenance ordinances and enforcement.			
		Research and establish a property maintenance program.			
	Engement with state, regional and local agencies	Work with different agencies to help advance the needs of the community.			
		Participate in workshops to increase knowledge of opportunities available.			
		When appropriate investigate opportunities to create shared services with surrounding communities			
		Where possible become involved with boards and commissions of professional organizations			

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#	Goal	Action	Timeframe	Key Partners	Tool
	Staffing and Training	Review staffing levels to determine if and where changes may need to take place to address changing needs of the community			
		Allocate sufficient resources to ensure adequate staffing and the ability to fund training opportunities for staff along with elected and appointed officials.			
	Encourage prudent use of City financial resources.	Encourage the use of standards of the Certificate of Financial Achievement Award as best practices for the City.			
		Encourage the City to continue to maintain a General Fund balanced budget.			
		Coordinate implementation and capital improvements plan efforts with the City Commission, appropriate departments			

Economic Vitality – downtown, DDA, commercial, industrial, tourism, economic development, redevelopment, marketing, business and entrepreneurship support					
#	Goal	Action	Timeframe	Key Partners	Tool
	Balanced growth while maintaining small town character	encourage and recruit businesses that provide goods, services, recreation, and employment opportunities that contribute to the vibrance of the community while meeting the needs of the community while attracting new residents.			
		work with the various cultural and arts organizations to promote arts and cultural programs in the city.			
		promote the vitality of downtown by emphasizing the entertainment and cultural center, restaurants, library, parks and shopping.			
	Economic Development	Work with the Chamber, DDA, Southwest Regional Chamber, Cornerstone Alliance and local businesses to enhance the City's economy and ability to provide affordable housing opportunities.			
		Continue working to gain Certified status through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Redevelopment Ready Communities program.			
		Continue to promote and implement the City's Brownfield Redevelopment Authority programs.			
		Investigate and promote state funding programs to help fill gaps in funding needed for both new and redevelopment opportunities			
		Adopt policies regarding the implementation of specific incentive tools.			
		Identify priority development sites to help property owner market			
		establish façade improvement program for commercial buildings			
		Determine if a corridor plan for the area east of Redbud Trail along East Front Street is needed and if so move forward with the process			
	Marketing	Coordinate with local agencies on the marketing of the community			
		implement wayfinding program to direct residents and visitors to the City's cultural and ____ resources.			